

# **April**

## "Drink Up, Babe"

April wasn't born in the usual sense. She *arrived*, one rainy evening in a town with no name, carried in by wind that smelled like forgotten perfume. She wore a red coat and a smile too wide for comfort. People said she looked like spring and trouble had a child.

No one knew where she stayed. No one remembered her leaving. But April had a way of showing up where the thirst was loudest.

She'd saunter into bars that hadn't seen beauty in years. In one hand: a silver flask etched with roses. In the other: a mask—smooth, perfect, the face of a woman who'd never heard the word "no." She called it her woman mask.

"Drink up, babe," she'd say to lonely men and daring women, tipping her flask into their waiting glasses. They'd laugh, cry, spill secrets. Some danced. Some disappeared.

The woman mask never smiled. But April did.

"She's just a myth," someone whispered once, watching the news talk about a missing man last seen smiling like he'd found God. "That girl in the red coat. A walking dream."

But the bartender at The Hollow Room remembers. She still keeps the mask behind the bar, hidden under the counter. Cold. Too perfect.

April? No one's seen her in years.

But on rainy nights, when the wind carries the scent of forgotten things, someone always hears it:

"Drink up, babe."

And the glass fills on its own.

### John

## "Drink Up, Babe"

John wasn't exactly a party guy. Most of his weekends involved a couch, a six-pack, and documentaries about sharks. But when his friend Marvin dragged him to the underground masquerade bar downtown, he figured one wild night wouldn't kill him.

The bar, "Velvet Masks," lived up to its name. Everyone wore ornate, glimmering masks—some feathered, some bejeweled, others... unsettlingly realistic. The air was heavy with incense, laughter, and the clinking of exotic glasses.

John sat at the bar, overwhelmed, sipping something neon green that tasted like Jolly Ranchers dipped in tequila. That's when he saw her. Or rather—it.

Behind the bar, in a glass case, was a bizarre-looking mask. Sleek, feminine, with glossy lips curved into a mischievous smirk. Beneath it, a gold-plated label read:

"Woman Mask - Drink Up, Babe."

John squinted. "Is that a drink?"

The bartender—a guy with a butterfly mask and a voice like smooth jazz—grinned. "It's an experience."

Before John could protest, the bartender pulled out the mask, filled it with a glimmering pink liquid, and handed it to him. "One free shot. But only if you wear the mask."

John hesitated, laughed awkwardly, then—because Marvin was already filming—slipped it on.

#### **Everything changed.**

The room tilted. The drink tingled on his tongue, sweet and intoxicating. Then, like fire and silk, it rushed through him. His posture shifted. His voice purred. His hips suddenly knew how to *sway*. He blinked, looking at his reflection in the mirror behind the bar.

He was still John... but now, he looked like *John if he were the lead in a femme fatale spy movie.* 

"Wha—what's in that drink?" he gasped.

The bartender just winked. "Confidence, darling."

The rest of the night was a blur of dancing, flirtation, and martinis. John moved like a goddess, sharp and dazzling. Everyone wanted to know her name. She gave them a sultry smirk and whispered, "Babe."

By sunrise, the mask had vanished, but John walked home in heels he didn't remember putting on—and a newfound sense of fabulous.

From that night on, whenever life got too dull, John would head back to Velvet Masks and ask for his usual:

"The Woman Mask. Drink Up, Babe."